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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004361

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TAGS: PGOV PREL SA IO

SUBJECT: TALABANI, BARZANI, HASHIMI MEET TO DISCUSS  
MODERATE COALITION PARTICIPATION

Classified By: Ambassador Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, Vice-President Tariq al-Hashimi, and Kurdistan Regional Government President Masud Barzani gave the Ambassador a readout of the November 24 PCNS meeting during a meeting on November 25 to develop plans for a broad moderate coalition. Hashimi said in today's meeting he was willing to work with the U.S. to fight against terrorism provided the U.S. protects Sunnis from Shia militias and unitary Iraqi security forces that work with them. Hashimi agreed to draft a paper on his expectations for the outcome of the PCNS to be presented at a meeting that will include SCIRI leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim and bring in the Prime Minister after getting Hakim's blessing. The participants agreed that Maliki should remain Prime Minister, and Talabani will delay his trip to Iran until November 28. END SUMMARY.

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Government (Mis) Organization, Lack of Decision-making  
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¶2. (C) Talabani, Barzani, and Hashimi reported on the PCNS meeting the night before. The meeting had focused on the issues of violence and government performance in a direct and frank exchange. They agreed the government has not implemented an effective program because of a flawed decision-making process and a lack of trust inside institutions such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense. Militias and terrorists have undermined the government, they said. They agreed the lack of organization in the government hinders the establishment of clear objectives on key issues such as terrorism, militias, and regional interference. The GOI needs a plan on security, effectiveness of government, and what changes need to be made to staffing and the government program. People in government do not share the same goals and some are using government for their own goals.

¶3. (C) Vice President Hashimi said if lack of trust is the issue, if the Prime Minister does not trust the Sunnis, Sunnis would be happy to leave the government. He said given the GOI failure to reach decisions, it would be better to be outside the government. He said, however, if Sunnis are included in decision-making then they will share the burden as well of confronting terrorists and extremists, but the Shia must take responsibility for the militias.

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Sunni Cooperation Contingent on U.S.  
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¶4. (C) In today's meeting Hashimi said he represents those Sunnis willing to work against terrorism. His Iraqi Islamic

Party (IIP) thinks that killing U.S. soldiers is against Sunni interests, and wants a partnership for building a democratic Iraq. He said the U.S. military also needs a new strategy to fight terror. It works poorly with locals and it responds slowly. The two Kurdish leaders said the government and the Coalition should be grateful that the IIP is willing to take on AQI in Anbar.

¶ 15. (C) The Sunnis are willing to work with the U.S. in turn and provide intelligence and people to fight the terrorists; the U.S. in turn must protect Sunnis and support moderate Sunni political leaders. He claimed he does not know what the U.S. wants from the Sunnis. Hashimi said there must be an understanding between the U.S. and the Sunnis on their responsibilities. He said they need clarity on what the U.S. wants and what they can do. The issue is the reform of security institutions penetrated by JAM. Hashimi argued that the U.S. needs to bring in more forces to protect Sunnis from the Shia militias and the MOI and MOD units penetrated by JAM. Participants agreed that JAM wants to be the Hizballah of Iraq, and the GOI needs to deal with it now; otherwise, JAM will become entrenched and an institutionalized government within a government. Barzani and Talabani agreed that, if asked, they could provide 30,000 peshmerga to contribute to securing Baghdad. Hashimi said he would agree to this if he is given specifics on their responsibilities in order to prepare the public for their arrival.

¶ 16. (C) Barzani said he had never heard such a clear and positive message and such a willingness to take responsibility from Hashimi before. He urged the Shia to cooperate by confronting the militias and penetrated security forces.

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¶ 17. (C) The Ambassador told Hashimi there had been great efforts to bring the Sunnis into the political process, but it has not produced fruitful results. Hashimi replied this was because those who fund the insurgents are calling the shots. The Sunni insurgents get their money from two sources: 1) Iran and Syria and 2) Arab businessman in the Gulf states. The U.S. and Gulf states need an effective strategy to buy off the insurgents. Using the military alone is ineffective.

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The Way Forward  
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¶ 18. (C) Hashimi agreed to draft a paper encapsulating his proposal for the outcome of the PCNS meeting and how to deal with Iraq's problems (SCIRI leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim is also meeting to develop concepts and ideas; on November 26 they will meet to see if their two drafts can be reconciled before bringing the consolidated draft to Maliki.)

¶ 19. (C) During a discussion on cabinet changes, everyone in attendance agreed there was not a realistic alternative to Maliki as Prime Minister, but Maliki wants Sunni Deputy Prime Minister Zubai replaced. They suggested holding weekly meetings between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Ministers to streamline decision-making.

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Talabani Agrees to Delay Iran Trip  
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¶ 10. (C) At the Ambassador's urging, Talabani said he had decided to postpone today's scheduled trip to Iran; he currently plans to leave on November 28. Hashimi told the Ambassador on November 24 that he had been invited by the King of Jordan to meet prior to the upcoming November 29-30 visit to Jordan by President Bush, but he offered to push back his November 26 departure date until Talabani leaves for Iran. Talabani said Vice President Adil al-Mahdi will return

from Tehran tonight.  
KHALILZAD